

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the present amendments and following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-16 are pending; base Claims 1 and 5 are amended by the forgoing amendment; and Claims 15 and 16 are newly added. It is respectfully submitted that no new subject matter is added by this amendment as clear support for the amendments can be found in Figures 5 and 6, and support for the newly added claims can be found on page 6, lines 3-4 and lines 19-22, for example.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by McAlpine et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,356,690B1, hereafter "McAlpine")¹. Claims 5-14 were rejected as unpatentable over McAlpine in view of Applicants' disclosure of prior art "Figure 3."

With regard to the rejection of Claims 1-4, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by McAlpine, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention relates to an optical fiber drop cable for connecting optical fiber to houses. Optical fiber drop cables are often divided by a narrow neck portion into two principle parts; a cable support section and an optical element. Both parts are enclosed by a sheath typically made of plastic. When the optical fiber drop cable is connected to a house, the cable support section is separated from the optical element at the narrow neck portion.

In the case of conventional optical fiber drop cables, the cable support section and optical element are often difficult to separate. Additionally, upon separation, the sheath

¹ The patent number cited by the Examiner as corresponding to McAlpine on page 2 of the outstanding Office Action is apparently incorrect. Also, on page 3 of the outstanding Office Action, another reference to McAlpine apparently includes an incorrect patent number. It is further noted that the McAlpine reference has not been included on the PTO form 892 attached to the outstanding Office Action. In order to advance prosecution of the present application, Applicants have assumed, based on the figures attached to the outstanding Office Action, that reference McAlpine cited in the outstanding Office Action corresponds to U.S. Pat. No. 6,356,690.

covering the cable support section could be damaged resulting in exposure of the support wire carried inside the cable support section.

In light of these difficulties, the Applicants developed the present invention, as recited, for example, in amended base Claims 1 and 5. Amended base Claim 1 recites, in part; an optical fiber, a cable support section, and a neck portion wherein "said neck portion includes a thick part disposed on the side of said cable support section, and a thin part, which is thinner than said thick part, disposed on the side of said optical element section, and wherein said neck portion further includes a step formed between said thick part and thin part." Amended base Claim also 5 recites, in part, a thick part formed on the support wire housing section and, "a step formed between said thick part and thin part."

As a result of this configuration, the optical fiber drop cable according to the present invention allows for easy separation of the cable support section and the optical element. Additionally, as the optical element section and the cable support section are separated at the optical element section side of the neck portion rather than the wire housing section, exposure of a strength member such as a support wire inside the cable support section can be prevented.

McAlpine discloses a neck portion connecting a carrier section and a messenger section as described in Figure 3 of the attachment in the outstanding Office Action. However, McAlpine does not disclose a neck portion with a step. Rather, the neck portion disclosed in Figure 3 is generally a gradual reduction in thickness of the material forming the neck. In contrast, the neck portion in amended Claims 1 and 5 includes well defined thin part and thick parts separated by a step.

Consequently, as McAlpine does not disclose the step as recited in amended base Claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that McAlpine does not anticipate this Claim, and Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 2-4 depend from amended Claim 1, and include all the limitations of amended Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 2-4 depending from amended Claim 1, are allowable.

The Examiner rejected Claims 5-14 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over McAlpine, in view of Figure 3. The rejection is respectfully traversed. The Examiner turns to Figure 3 to remedy the deficiencies of McAlpine with respect to Claim 5. Specifically, the Examiner relies on Figure 3 to provide a pair of V shaped notches formed on the opposite surfaces in the y direction. However, like McAlpine, Figure 3 does not suggest or teach, “a step formed between said thick part and thin part.” Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

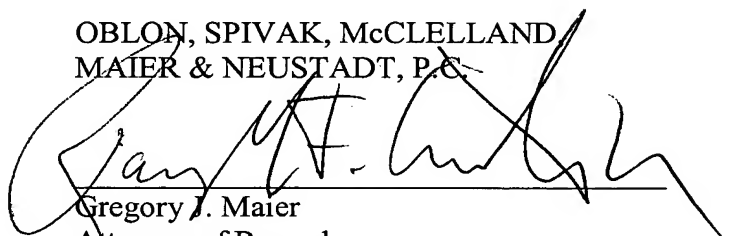
Applicants respectfully urge that amended base Claim 5 has been distinguished as noted above. Claims 6-14 depend from amended Claim 5 and include all the limitations of amended Claim 5. Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 5 and Claims 6-14 depending from amended Claim 5, are allowable over McAlpine in view of Figure 3.

Newly added base Claim 15 recites, in part, a “neck portion including a breakable part disposed on the side of said optical element section at which said neck portion is adapted to break when separating said optical element section from said cable support section, and a protective part disposed on the side of said cable support section which prevents said cable support section from breaking.” As McAlpine does not disclose a protective part, for at least this reason, Applicants respectfully submit that newly added base Claim 15 is distinguished patentably as is newly added Claim 16 which depends from amended base Claim 1.

Consequently, in view of the foregoing discussion, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Maier', is written over a horizontal line.

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